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DCR to Rehabilitate the Storrow Drive Tunnel

Rebuilding the existing tunnel faster, less expensive than other options
Impacts of all alternatives for construction management to be carefully considered

BOSTON – SEPT. 14, 2007 – Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) Commissioner Richard K. Sullivan Jr. announced today that DCR is proposing to rehabilitate the 55-year-old Storrow Drive tunnel rather than pursue more expensive, more time-consuming alternatives for updating a section of the parkway that carries 103,000 vehicles a day – eastbound traffic through the tunnel while westbound cars ride on top – through Boston's Back Bay neighborhood.

After a nearly two-year design process, which included input from two citizens advisory committees, Commissioner Sullivan has chosen the tunnel renovation as the best of several options developed by the design firm Simpson Gumpertz & Heger Inc. "Option A," as the renovation is called, is the least expensive and least time-consuming option that maintains traffic capacity. A brief description of all the options is attached.

"This has been a lengthy and painstaking design process, and with good reason," Commissioner Sullivan said. "With much hard work and input from the members of our two advisory committees, whom I thank very much for their service, I have come to the conclusion that renovating the existing tunnel is the best option for making this important roadway safe and reliable for another 50 years or more. I look forward to continued discussion and public input as we move ahead."

The next step involves considering the impact of various methods of managing the construction of the tunnel over two years or more, Commissioner Sullivan said. DCR and Simpson Gumpertz engineers have identified four possible approaches to the work, and each has significant impacts on traffic flow, Back Bay neighbors and businesses, and the Esplanade parkland during construction. The four alternatives are:

- Full closure of Storrow Drive: All traffic would be diverted to local streets for 18 months. Daytime construction (7:30 a.m.–7 p.m.); 22 trees lost on Back Street and Esplanade. Cost: $40 million

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- Temporary eastbound bypass road alongside Back Street, nighttime shutdown of westbound traffic: Maintain 80 percent of daytime traffic flow; divert westbound traffic to local streets at night. Nighttime construction (9 p.m.–6 a.m.), for 29 months; 70 trees lost on Back Street and Esplanade. Cost: $40 million
- Temporary eastbound bypass road alongside Back Street, temporary westbound bypass road on Esplanade: Maintain 80 percent of traffic flow; daytime construction, for 22 months; 89 trees lost on Back Street and Esplanade. Cost: $50 million
- Elevated parkway detour: Full closure of Storrow Drive westbound for three weeks for construction of temporary elevated roadway, then maintain 80 percent of traffic flow. Daytime construction, for 34 months. At least 100 trees lost on Back Street and Esplanade. Cost: $65 million

In the coming weeks, DCR will present these construction-management alternatives for public consideration and seek input on the difficult tradeoffs these options represent in the interest of identifying the best way to meet the needs of the public during construction.

“It turns out there is no painless way to rebuild a tunnel on a heavily used urban parkway,” said Commissioner Sullivan. “We are looking for feedback from all impacted constituencies as we consider the best way to manage this difficult but essential project.”

Commissioner Sullivan also noted that all of the alternatives will have an impact on DCR parkland, including the Esplanade, and that the agency is fully committed to restoring its properties to pre-construction condition.

“As steward of the Commonwealth’s parks, I am duty-bound to restore the parkway and the Esplanade to original condition, if not better, once the new tunnel is completed,” said Commissioner Sullivan. “That’s my obligation, and my pledge, no matter what construction method is employed.”

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Summary Comparison of Short-Listed Tunnel Reconstruction Methods

	Preferred Reconstruction Method	**Other Tunnel Reconstruction Methods Considered**				
	Rehabilitate Existing Tunnel	Parkway with Traffic Signals	Parkway with Underpass at Beacon Street	New Westbound Tunnel with At- Grade Eastbound Parkway	New East and Westbound Tunnels	New East and Westbound Tunnels with pedestrian mall
Construction Cost*	$50 to 55 million	$24 million	$61 million	$83 million	$216 million	$131 million
Service Life	60 years	100 years	75 years	75 years	75 years	75 years
Annual Capital Cost, without Interest, Over Service Life*	$0.9 million	$0.2 million	$0.8 million	$1.1 million	$2.9 million	$1.7 million
Annual Operating Costs*	$200,000	$100,000	$150,000	$300,000	$900,000	$600,000
Esplanade Open Space Gained	+ 0.1 acre	+0.7 acre	+ 0.7 acre	+ 1.1 acres	+1.77 acres	+ 0.9 acre
Pedestrian/Bicycle Connection	New ADA accessible Fiedler footbridge	At-grade crossings at Arlington and Berkeley Streets	New ADA accessible Fiedler footbridge	At-grade crossings at Arlington and Berkeley Streets	Pedestrian Mall at Mt. Vernon, Beacon & Berkeley Streets	Pedestrian Mall at Beacon St. and at-grade at Berkeley St.
Groundwater Impacts	New groundwater recharge system	None	New groundwater recharge system	New groundwater recharge system	New groundwater recharge system	New groundwater recharge system
Through Traffic Impact	None	Reduces peak capacity by 40%	None	Reduces Eastbound peak capacity by 40%	None	None
Changes to Existing Entrances and Exits	None	None are eliminated, but most become signalized	Close west on at Berkeley Street Add east off to Dartmouth Street Close east off to Arlington Street	None are eliminated, but most become signalized	Close west on at Berkeley Street Add west on at Clarendon Street (in lieu of WB-on at Berkeley) Close east off at Clarendon Street Add east off to Dartmouth Street (in lieu of EB off at Clarendon)	Add east off to Dartmouth Street Close east off to Arlington Street
Financial Benefit from Interim Repairs	Approximately $4 Million of the repairs will be utilized	No benefit	No benefit	No benefit	No benefit	No benefit
Construction Duration	1.9 to 2.4 years	1.9 years	3.5 years	3.0 years	5.0 years	4.2 years

* Estimated costs are based on 2007 dollars.

Construction Management Options for Tunnel Rehabilitation:

1. Full closure of Storrow Drive during the construction.
    - Estimated cost: $40 million
    - Estimated project duration: 18 months
    - Anticipated traffic impacts: All traffic will be detoured onto Back Bay streets; frequent to continuous traffic jams are anticipated during daytime peak hours.
    - Anticipated times of heavy construction activity: 7:30 a.m.-7 p.m.
    - Estimated area of Esplanade closed to public during construction: Approximately 1200 feet by 40 feet adjacent to the edge of the pavement from the Fiedler Foot Bridge to Clarendon street will be a construction zone.
    - Total tree loss on the Esplanade and Back Street: 22 trees

2. Construct a temporary eastbound bypass road along Back Street and route daytime westbound traffic through the existing tunnel, with nighttime westbound shut down
    - Estimated cost: $40 million
    - Estimated project duration: 29 months
    - Anticipated traffic impacts: Daytime, approximately 80 percent of traffic flow will be maintained; the remainder will be detoured onto local streets. At night, because of the full closure of the tunnel, westbound traffic will be detoured onto local streets.
    - Anticipated times of heavy construction activity: 9 p.m.-6 a.m.
    - Estimated area of Esplanade closed to public during construction: Approximately 1200 feet by 40 feet adjacent to the edge of the pavement from the Fiedler Foot Bridge to Clarendon Street will be a construction zone.
    - Total tree loss on the Esplanade and Back Street: 70 trees

3. Construct a temporary eastbound bypass parallel to Back Street and a temporary westbound bypass road along the southern edge of the Esplanade.
    - Estimated cost: $50 million
    - Estimated project duration: 22 months
    - Anticipated traffic impacts: Approximately 80 percent of traffic flow will be maintained; the remainder will be displaced onto local streets.
    - Anticipated times of heavy construction activity: 7:30 a.m.-7 p.m.
    - Estimated area of Esplanade closed to public during construction: Approximately 1200-foot by 40-foot area adjacent to edge of pavement starting at the Fiedler Footbridge to Clarendon Street to accommodate a temporary westbound bypass detour.
    - Total tree loss on the Esplanade and Back Street: 89 trees

4. Construct an elevated parkway detour
    - Estimated cost: $65 million
    - Estimated project duration: 34 months
    - Anticipated traffic impacts: A full closure of westbound traffic for three weeks while the elevated roadway is constructed. Once it is constructed, 80 percent of traffic flow will be maintained; the remainder will be displaced onto local streets.
    - Anticipated times of heavy construction activity: 7:30 a.m.-7 p.m.
    - Estimated area of Esplanade closed to public during construction: Approximately 1600-foot by 40-foot area adjacent to edge of pavement from the Hatch Shell to Dartmouth Street footbridge for a construction zone.
    - Total tree loss on the Esplanade and Back Street: At least 100 trees.